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Tuesday, June 10, 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

Honorable Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

97-137

IN RE: Ameritech's Application To Offer Long-Distance
Service in Michigan

Dear Chairman Hundt:

Although the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) is impressed with the speed with which the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has acted on the many items contained in Telecommunications Act of 1996 like the Commission's recent decision to establish a \$2.2 billion fund for public schools to be wired for internet access, we believe that an issue of even greater importance is in danger of becoming bogged down in the politics of Washington. The NACW encourages you not to let that happen.

The NACW is writing to urge you to approve Ameritech Corporation's application to provide long-distance service in Michigan. Ameritech's entry into the long-distance market will mean lower rates and better service for consumers in Michigan. Ameritech's entry would mean that consumers would have a wider choice in selecting long-distance services which would have the concomitant effect of ushering in a new era of competition for the long distance industry. For example, among the findings of an April 1997 study, "Women are Embracing Technology" conducted by Penn, Schoen and Berland, it concluded that:

- o twenty-nine (29%) percent of women work at home. When they do, they're apt to rely on computers and fax machines.
- o professional women earning more than \$45,000 a year are three times more likely to be heavy computer users.
- o seventy-nine (79%) percent of women say you need to know how to use the latest tech gadgets.
- o seventy-nine (79%) also say they use a computer at work and 63% log onto a PC daily.

Women are smart enough to make choices about the kinds of communication services we need. We make choices everyday in almost every aspect of our lives. The last thing we need is government regulations that limit our choices, and we certainly don't need government to mandate what price we pay for the goods and services we choose. And yet, this is the situation that exists today in the long-distance industry. In a November 28, 1996 Washington Post article, Gene Kimmelman, Washington Co-director of Consumers Union said, "...there is crucial need to jump-start competition" in the long distance industry." In a later article, the Washington Post reported that the price hikes from AT&T, Sprint and MCI fall hardest on the two-thirds of American who are not on discount calling plans. With women making up more than fifty-three (53%) of the population base nationwide, it follows that we are disproportionately impacted and might even make up the majority of consumers not covered by discount rate plans.

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With a sizable number of single family women headed households nationwide, having choice that leads to cost savings would increase annual disposable income. Any dollar savings, for example, could be redirected to cover other household and family expenses.

The time has come for this to change. I urge you to support Ameritech's application for entry into long distance. All markets, including local and long-distance should be open to competition. In its application, Ameritech has demonstrated that its market in Michigan is open through satisfying the fourteen (14) point checklist requirement as provided for in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and as set forth in its FCC application for long-distance entry.

It has been more than a year since President Clinton signed the Communications Act into Public Law. The time has come to open up the long-distance market, Ameritech is poised to make this happen in Michigan.

The National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) represents the more than 270 state, county and local commissions nationwide including state commissions in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. The NACW promotes the interest of women in cultural, social and economic fields. NACW supports policies and programs that empower women to make informed choices about all aspects of their lives. NACW has been active in the debate on telecommunications reform, supporting legislative and regulatory initiatives to enhance competition, thereby creating new options and services for women as consumers and in their businesses.

NACW's e-mail addresses are:

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- o ipq@kh3y.com.

Our homepage is presently under construction and will be online after August 15. Our address will be <http://www.nacw.org>.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Camille Failla Murphy